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ABSTRACT

A study examined spatial factors (minority population, segregation, racial differences in the workforce and the educational system, and minority public officials) and organizational factors (ownership and circulation) that may predict newsroom minority employment. Data for this secondary analysis of 172 newspapers were gathered from earlier studies conducted by the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), the United States census, and other sources. Regression analysis and analysis of variance suggest that the most significant predictors of newsroom minority employment are minority population, newspaper ownership, race of mayor, and ethnicity of regional workforce. (Five tables of data are included; 15 references are attached.) (Author/RS)

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Spatial and Organizational Predictors of Newsroom Minority Employment

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Abstract

Spatial and Organizational Predictors of Newsroom Minority Employment

The American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) has been collecting data since 1978 on minority employment in U.S. newsrooms. Recent figures place the percentage of news-editorial positions held by minorities at 8.72 percent, while 51 percent of newsrooms have no minority journalists on staff. Relatively little is known, however, about what factors predict to such minority representation.

This research examines the spatial and organizational factors that may predict to newsroom minority employment, incorporating predictors suggested both by sociological literature on occupational differentiation by race and by mass communication literature on news sources. A secondary analysis was conducted of data from ASNE, the U.S. census, and other sources. Regression analysis and ANOVA suggest that the most significant predictors of newsroom minority employment are minority population, newspaper ownership, race of mayor, and ethnicity of regional workforce.

Introduction to the Problem & Literature

The American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) has been collecting data since 1978 on minority employment in U.S. newsrooms. Recent figures from ASNE place the percentage of news-editorial positions (reporters, photographers, copy editors, supervisors) held by minorities at 8.72 percent, while 51 percent of newsrooms have no minority journalists their staffs ("Level of Minorities," 1991).

Relatively little is known, however, about what factors predict to such minority representation. ASNE suggests that a newspaper's size may have some influence on minority employment, as papers with circulations of less than 25,000 tend to employ minority journalists less frequently than do larger papers. According to ASNE, approximately 60 percent of minority journalists are employed at newspapers with circulations greater than 100,000. However, Haws' (1991) secondary analysis of ASNE data shows some evidence that smaller circulation papers may be doing a better job of "matching" the percentage of minorities in the newsroom with that in the population. Haws suggests that this finding may be attributable to the larger number of small circulation papers.

The ASNE data further reveal differences in minority newsroom representation among different regions of the country, with three regions showing higher newsroom minority employment than the national average: The Pacific (12.2 percent), West South Central(12.1 percent), and South Atlantic (10.8 percent). The causes of that variation remain unexplored, however.

This study examines the spatial and organizational factors that may predict to newsroom minority employment. While including the variables discussed thus far, this analysis further incorporates predictors suggested by both mass communication literature and sociological literature on occupational differentiation by race. Thus, this research is exploratory in nature, with an emphasis on model building. It incorporates spatial and organizational factors, but does not address individual level variables which may affect minority hiring.

Spatial factors associated with occupational opportunities include population, minority population, segregation, racial differences in the workforce and educational system, and minority public officials. Organizational factors include ownership and circulation.

Population

LaGory and Magnani (1979) have suggested that increased urbanization (as indicated by increased urban population) leads to more minority employment opportunity. This effect, however, may depend on the ethnicity of the growing population. Some researchers (*e.g.* Blalock,1967; Jiobu & Marshall, 1971) have suggested that as a minority population increases, tolerance decreases. The growing minority population is perceived as a threat, and therefore, members of minority groups are offered fewer occupational opportunities -- discrimination is motivated by competition and threat. But others, such as Semyonov, Hoyt and Scott (1984), have argued that as the proportion of blacks in the labor force increases, the likelihood of finding them in *any* occupation increases.

Applying this question to the newsroom, minority journalists may be unenthusiastic about joining an organization situated in a town or city with a

small minority population. And, editors may be more concerned about reaching minority readers when they constitute a significant percentage of the population. In both cases, the minority population of a city or town may influence newsroom minority hiring. Indeed, Haws (1991) provides evidence of a moderate relationship between minority newsroom workforce and minority population.

Segregation

Residential segregation long has been considered an indicator of social stratification -- the distribution of rewards in society. According to Jakubs (1986, p. 146), who has worked extensively at developing indices of segregation , "segregation in U.S. cities has been deemed to be inconsistent with opportunity equality in ... present and future employment opportunities." Similarly, Winship (1977, p. 1058) singles out residential segregation as a basis of discrimination: "In particular, residential segregation is the basis for much discrimination in both education and employment."

For news organizations, perceived or actual discrimination within their circulation area may have an impact on their minority hiring. Burroughs (1990) quotes Steve Hartgen of the Twin Falls (Idaho) Times-News: "Many entry-level journalists, minority and non-minority, see small towns as narrow-minded places, a combination of 'The Last Picture Show' and 'Murder in Mississippi.'" And, while print journalists are less visible to news audiences than are their broadcast counterparts, news organizations still may be concerned about majority audience and news source reaction to minority journalists. For example, one Hispanic print journalist reports severely bigoted and racist reactions from members of his Anglo readership,

while others report they have less access to Anglo news sources than do their Anglo counterparts (pers. comm, 1986).

Racial Differences in Labor Force and Education

LaGory and Magnani (1979) and Jiobu and Marshall (1971) argue that racial differences in the available workforces are better predictors of occupational attainment than are figures representative of the general population. Figures from the labor force provide a better measure of availability, as they control for age and education. For news organizations, a diverse workforce may not only provide qualified workers, but also serve as a source for stories -- and editors may want journalists able to cover such stories.

For journalism, education may also prove to be an important predictor. Liebler (1991) reports regional differences in the percentage of communication graduates who are minorities, which is consistent with Wearden's (1990) finding for participation on student newspapers. While news organizations do not rely solely on graduates of journalism programs to fill their positions, the availability of qualified minority job candidates is certainly critical to diversifying the workforce ("Want to Find," 1991).

Minority Public Officials

A number of researchers have shown the propensity of the news media to rely on official news sources (*e.g.* Brown *et al.*, 1987; Sigal,1973), although Riffe, Sneed and Van Ommeren (1990) report that black elected officials feel neglected by the news media. The latter finding may be at least partially explained by Gans (1979), who has argued that journalists rely on sources who are socially and culturally proximate to them. Thus, news organizations located in towns or cities with minority public officials may be

more inclined to hire minority journalists, thereby attaining better access to these news sources.

The presence of minority public officials may further indicate minority power, or at least, a level of tolerance in a community, which could be translated into occupational opportunities, including in newsrooms.

Ownership

The degree to which a news organization is dedicated to minority hiring may be a result of the message sent by ownership. If executives are supportive, the news organization may be more likely to participate in minority job fairs, internships, scholarships and other strategies designed to attract minority job applicants. Burroughs (1990, p. 12) cites the Gannett Co., the New York Times Co., Knight-Ridder, Dow Jones' Ottaway Newspapers, Scripps Howard, Donrey and others as examples of newspaper groups for which minority recruitment is ongoing; she further points out, though, that "corporate encouragement alone will not do the job." ASNE ("Staying the Course," 1991) also reports that in 1990, twelve minority job fairs were held and these were attended by 20-25 newspaper companies.

To the extent that newspaper companies vary in such commitment to minority hiring, ownership is a potential factor influencing variation in minority hiring.

Method

This study was a secondary analysis. Thus, the nature and size of the sample newspapers (n = 172) was constrained by availability of data.

The independent variables were region, population, minority population, segregation, minority workforce, minority communication

graduates, minority public officials, circulation and ownership. The dependent variable was minority representation in newsrooms.

Each newspaper was assigned a region based on census regions. These regions are the West, South, Midwest and Northeast.

Population and minority population were determined by 1990 U.S. census data for the Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area in which the newspaper was located.

Segregation was measured using the index of dissimilarity, which assesses "the number of people in a given SMSA who would have to relocate to eliminate racial unevenness" (Jakubs, 1986, p. 147). Dissimilarity figures based on 1990 census data were obtained from USA Today Special Projects for black-anglo and Hispanic-anglo residential segregation for the SMSA in which the newspaper was located.

The minority workforce was assessed using data from the U.S. Department of Labor, whose statistics include a breakdown of regional workforces by race or ethnicity; *i.e.*, what percent of the region's workforce is white, Hispanic and black. These figures are based on 1990 census data and were obtained for each newspaper's region.

Minority communication graduates was operationalized by calculating the percentage of total communication graduates who were minorities, based on data obtained from the National Center for Education Statistics 1988-89 completions survey. The U.S. Department of Education's classification of communication includes general communication, advertising, communication research, journalism and mass communication, public relations, radio/television broadcasting, and telecommunications.

Percentages were calculated for each newspaper's region for total minority students, black students and Hispanic students.

Minority public officials was operationalized as the percent of total officials in the newspaper's region who were black, as determined by Black Elected Officials. A National Roster, 1989. This variable was further measured by whether the town or city in which the newspaper was located had a black mayor, using this same source.

Circulation and ownership of newspapers were determined using the Editor and Publisher International Yearbook, 1990.

Minority representation in newsrooms was determined by ASNE's available figures for 1990, as published in the ASNE Committee Reports, April 1991. ASNE conducts a survey each year, and for the past two has offered news organizations the option of disclosing their minority employment rate. It should be noted that the percent of newsroom staff which is minority is higher (9.7) at disclosing newspapers than it is at nondisclosing (6.0).

Measurement of all of the variables was at the ratio level, with the exception of region and ownership, which were nominal level variables.

Results

The newspapers included in the sample ranged in circulation from 4,629 to 1,194,337. The mean minority employment at these papers was 11.08 percent. This figure is higher than the national average for papers which disclosed their 1990 figures, but lower than that found in some regions of the country.

As shown in Table 1, five of the continuous independent variables were significantly correlated ($p < .05$) with newsroom minority employment. Based on these correlations, newsroom minority employment was regressed on these variables: minority communication graduates, Hispanics in the workforce, minority population and total SMSA 1990 population, along with a dummy variable for race of mayor (1=black, 0= non-black or white). Hispanic communication graduates was not included as an independent variable in the equation due to concerns of multicollinearity.

Table 2 provides the results of this regression. While the equation explains roughly 28 percent of the variance, only three of the variables (minority population, Hispanic workforce and mayor) are significant predictors of newsroom minority employment. And, these three variables alone explain nearly 28 percent of the variance when newsroom minority employment is regressed on them (See Table 3). For the purposes of further analysis, residuals were retained from this "best" linear unbiased estimate or BLUE equation.

Analysis of variance was used to test the effects of the categorical independent variables, region and ownership. An one-way ANOVA with region as the independent variable was initially significant ($F = 6.51$, $df = 171$, $p < .01$). This variable was not, however, a significant predictor of the residuals from the BLUE regression ($F = .63$, $df = 93$, $p > .5$). In other words, the variance in minority employment explained by region is captured by the variables from the regression equation. It is not the simple categorization by region that explains newsroom minority employment, but other variables which vary by region.

By contrast, ownership not only predicted to the raw data on minority employment ($F = 2.51$, $df = 171$, $p < .05$), but also explained a significant portion of the residual variance from the regression equation (Table 4). Thus the ownership variable is accounting for additional variance, not overlapping with the regression variables. Table 5 provides the mean newsroom minority employment for the owners included in the ANOVA, and shows the Gannett Co. newspapers leading the way in newsroom integration.

Discussion

Findings of this study both supported and contradicted aspects of previous research. Some of the variables that were expected to be significant predictors of newsroom minority employment proved insignificant. In particular, within this sample measures of segregation were not correlated with minority employment, while circulation was only slightly so. However, several interesting relationships did emerge in this analysis.

The percentage of the population that was minority was strongly correlated with newsroom employment, and was a significant predictor in the regression equation. This finding contradicts those theorists who have argued that as the minority population (and therefore, competition) in a town or city increases, tolerance levels decrease, leading to reduced minority occupational opportunity. Instead, as discussed by Haws (1991), newspapers seem to be responding to a diversified social environment by employing minority journalists -- a trend that may lead to better news coverage of minority issues.

The race of a town or city's mayor also proved to be a significant predictor of minority employment, although the regional measure of black

officials did not. The reason for this seemingly contradictory finding probably lies in the fact that the measure for mayor was for the city or town, while the black official measure was determined regionally. And, for a newspaper, the mayor is much more likely to be influential than are public officials miles away. As a result, newspapers are more likely to employ minority journalists in towns and cities with black mayors. This finding illuminates the news media's tendency to rely on official sources, and may also indicate a tendency for newspaper's to follow the lead of the power structure in its hiring.

This research also examined the influence of the racial composition of the labor force in the region in which the newspaper was located. Interestingly, the representation of blacks in the labor force was not correlated with newsroom minority employment, but the representation of Hispanics was. This finding warrants further attention, but may indicate that Hispanics have been more successful at translating their numbers into attaining professional positions (such as journalism) than have blacks. As the ASNE data are not classified by race or ethnicity, it is mere speculation that perhaps in some regions, a language barrier has spurred news organizations to hire Hispanic journalists. Or, perhaps, as has often been the case, blacks are experiencing more prejudice and discrimination than are other U.S. minority groups. Yet, it should be noted that there are more blacks than Hispanics employed by newspapers.

Perhaps not surprising, but nonetheless interesting , is the finding that news organization ownership has significant influence on newsroom minority hiring. Some owners, such as those mentioned above, have made minority hiring a priority, and this has translated into increased minority employment. Yet, ownership may also encompass other variables such as

salary, which may affect both a minority journalist's willingness to work for a particular newspaper and the competition she/he faces in seeking employment there.

The role of minority student journalism education also requires further research. While the percentage of communication graduates in a region who were minorities was significantly correlated with minority employment, this variable was not a significant predictor in the regression equation. However, there is multicollinearity between minority graduates and other variables in the model (tolerance = .18), and further research could determine this variable's true contribution. Many editors attend minority job fairs in their region, and offer minority scholarships and internships -- and sometimes only students at nearby colleges and universities are eligible. Thus, the availability of local talent within the region seemingly would have an impact on news organization's ability to hire minorities.

Future research should also examine the role of individual level variables in newsroom minority hiring. For example, how do an editor's priorities and prejudices affect this hiring? Or the presence of a minority editor?

Finally, "minorities" should not be treated monolithically. While this research has attempted to distinguish among minority groups when possible, the unavailability of data on hiring of individual ethnic or racial groups (the dependent variable) may have obscured further relationships between the dependent and independent variables in this study.

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TABLE 1

PEARSON CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS OF CONTINUOUS VARIABLES WITH MINORITY NEWSROOM REPRESENTATION

VARIABLE	r
Minority Graduates	.30*
Black Graduates	-.02
Hispanic Graduates	.26*
Hispanics in Workforce	.35*
Blacks in Workforce	-.06
Minority Population	.48*
Circulation	.14
Black-Anglo Segregation	.08
Hispanic-Anglo Segregation	.06
Total (SMSA) 1990 Population	.18*

* $p < .05$

TABLE 2

NEWSROOM MINORITY EMPLOYMENT REGRESSED ON MINORITY COMMUNICATION GRADUATES, HISPANICS IN WORKFORCE, MINORITY POPULATION, TOTAL POPULATION AND RACE OF MAYOR

VARIABLE	COEFFICIENT	STANDARDIZED COEFFICIENT	t-STATISTIC	p
Minority Population	0.213	0.388	4.778	.0001
Mayor	3.983	0.224	3.112	.0022
Hispanic Workforce	0.389	0.352	2.270	.0245
Minority Graduates	-0.263	-0.152	-1.010	.3139
Total Population	-0.000	-0.077	-0.996	.3206
Constant	4.769			

$R^2 = .299$ Adj. $R^2 = .278$ $p < .001$ $n = 172$

TABLE 3

"BEST" (B.L.U.E.) REGRESSION EQUATION PREDICTING NEWSROOM MINORITY EMPLOYMENT

VARIABLE	COEFFICIENT	STANDARDIZED COEFFICIENT	t-STATISTIC	p
Minority Population	0.194	0.354	4.756	.0001
Hispanic Workforce	0.246	0.223	2.993	.0032
Mayor	3.437	0.193	2.870	.0046
Constant	3.371			

$R^2 = .290$ Adj. $R^2 = .278$ $p < .001$ $n = 172$

TABLE 4

ONE-WAY ANOVA TESTING THE INFLUENCE OF NEWSPAPER GROUP OWNERSHIP ON RESIDUALS FROM THE "BEST" REGRESSION EQUATION

SOURCE	SS	d.f.	MS	F
Owner	884.72	9	98.30	4.03*
Error	2046.54	84	24.36	-------
Total	2931.26	93	--------	-------

n = 89 * $p < .001$

Note: There are fewer observations in the anova than in the regression equation because only the newspapers from newspaper groups of five or more were included in the anova.

TABLE 5

MEAN PERCENTAGES OF MINORITY JOURNALISTS EMPLOYED BY NEWSPAPERS IN THE OVERALL SAMPLE AND WITHIN NEWSPAPER GROUPS COMPRISING FIVE OR MORE NEWSPAPERS IN THE SAMPLE

GROUP MINORITY	# OF PAPERS	MEAN %
Overall Sample	**172**	**11.08**
Gannett Company, Inc.	21	16.69
Knight-Ridder, Inc.	20	14.08
Cox Newspapers	8	13.95
New York Times Co.	11	12.58
Tribune Co.	5	12.16
Hearst Newspapers	5	11.48
McClatchy Newspapers	6	10.98
Donrey Media Group	6	9.82
Newhouse Newspapers	5	9.54
Freedom Newspapers Inc.	7	5.74